

## PART IV

## The Pattern of Agriculture

Farms: Number and Size

Small and medium sized farms are characteristic of agriculture in Skamania County. Average size of farm is 112 acres and nearly 70 percent of the farms enumerated in the last Census of Agriculture were less than 100 acres each. Because of mountainous and forested topography, farms are not numerous. Skamania ranks last in the state in number of farms with a total of 239 but is twenty-second in the average size of farm.

Farm numbers have fluctuated during the period from 1900 to 1954. In 1900 farms numbered 239 and reached a peak of 331 farms during World War II. In 1954 there were again 239 farms. As is common in much of the state, farms are tending to become fewer but larger. The average farm size was 91 acres in 1920 compared with 112 acres in 1954. As a rule, smaller farms are being consolidated through purchases or leases and total land in farms has shown a slight decrease during the last 50 years. From a total of 39,851 acres in 1900, total area in farms decreased to 26,813 in 1954.

The large number of small farms results from earlier land purchase methods and an interest in part-time farming by industrial workers. Many of the early large land claims have been divided into smaller holdings.

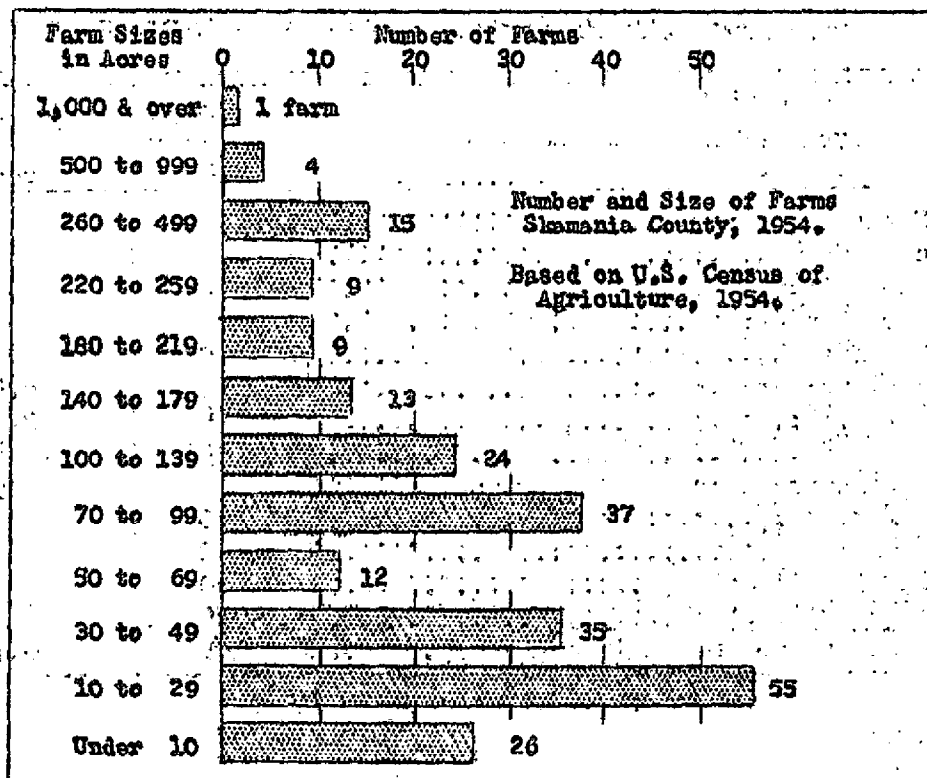


Figure 8.- Number and Size of Skamania County Farms, 1954.

Table 10.- Farms, Number and Average Size, Land in Farms  
Skamania County, 1900-1954

| Year | Total Farms<br>in the County | Total County<br>area in farms<br>(acres) | Average size<br>of farms in<br>the county<br>(acres) | Percent of<br>County area<br>in farms |
|------|------------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1900 | 239                          | 39,851                                   | 166.7  | 3.7                                   |
| 1910 | 232                          | 25,631                                   | 110.5  | 2.4                                   |
| 1920 | 284                          | 25,757                                   | 90.7   | 2.4                                   |
| 1925 | 310                          | 29,283                                   | 94.5   | 2.7                                   |
| 1930 | 278                          | 25,073                                   | 90.2   | 2.3                                   |
| 1940 | 331                          | 29,191                                   | 88.2   | 2.7                                   |
| 1945 | 304                          | 29,082                                   | 92.4   | 2.7                                   |
| 1950 | 240                          | 24,921                                   | 104.3  | 2.3                                   |
| 1954 | 239                          | 26,813                                   | 111.7  | 2.5                                   |

Source: U.S. Census, AgricultureTypes of Farms

Nearly 77 percent of the farms in Skamania are miscellaneous or unclassified types because of the varied nature of their incomes. Poultry farms, numbering 25 or ten percent of the total, are the most common specialized type farms. Other specialized farms include fruit and nut, livestock other than dairy and poultry, and dairy.

Table 11.- Types of Farms, Skamania County, 1954

| Types of Farms                               | Number of<br>Farms | Percent of<br>all farms in<br>the county |
|--|--------------------|--|
| Total farms in county.....                   | 241                |  |
| Field-crop farms.....                        | 0                  |  |
| Cash-grain.....                              | 0                  |  |
| Other field-crop.....                        | 0                  |  |
| Vegetable farms.....                         | 0                  |  |
| Fruit-and-nut farms.....                     | 20                 | 8.3                                      |
| Dairy farms.....                             | 5                  | 2.1                                      |
| Poultry farms.....                           | 25                 | 10.4                                     |
| Livestock farms other than dairy and poultry | 6                  | 2.5                                      |
| General farms.....                           | 0                  |  |
| Primarily crop.....                          | 0                  |  |
| Primarily livestock.....                     | 0                  |  |
| Crop and livestock.....                      | 0                  |  |
| Miscellaneous and unclassified farms.....    | 185                | 76.7                                     |

Source: U.S. Census, AgricultureFarm Values

As is true in many of the counties in Washington, the value of farm property has increased greatly since 1900 in Skamania County. In 1954 farm

property totaled \$2,948,400, a substantial increase over the 1900 figure of \$468,264. An average farm in 1954 was valued at \$12,285 and averaged \$120 per acre. The increase in the value of farm property is the result of several factors. One is the general rise in prices of real estate and standing timber throughout western United States. Value has been added by heavy investment of labor and capital for land clearing and other improvements in the past thirty years.

Table 12.- Value of Farm Property  
Skamania County, 1900-1954

| Year | Total Value<br>All Farm Property<br>in County | County Average Values |                       |
|------|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|      |   | Per Farm<br>(dollars) | Per Acre<br>(dollars) |
| 1900 | \$ 468,264                                    | \$ 1,960              | \$ 12                 |
| 1910 | 1,597,075                                     | 6,880                 | 62                    |
| 1920 | 2,108,741                                     | 6,485                 | 72                    |
| 1930 | 1,863,136                                     | 6,700                 | 75                    |
| 1940 | 1,526,411                                     | 4,510                 | 52                    |
| 1950 | 1,920,843                                     | 8,040                 | 60                    |
| 1954 | 2,948,400                                     | 12,285                | 120                   |

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

#### Farm Tenure

A large majority (84 out of each 100 farmers) own and fully operate their farms. Tenancy (the renting and leasing of entire farms) is uncommon; only 18 out of a total of 240 farms were being operated by tenants in 1954. Tenancy has decreased since 1940 when about 50 farms were under the tenant system. The part-ownership type of farm tenure has become more common since 1940. This pattern is caused in part by many elderly persons and part-time workers maintaining ownership of their farms while letting other farmers operate part of the land. No farms were reported in 1954 as being manager operated.

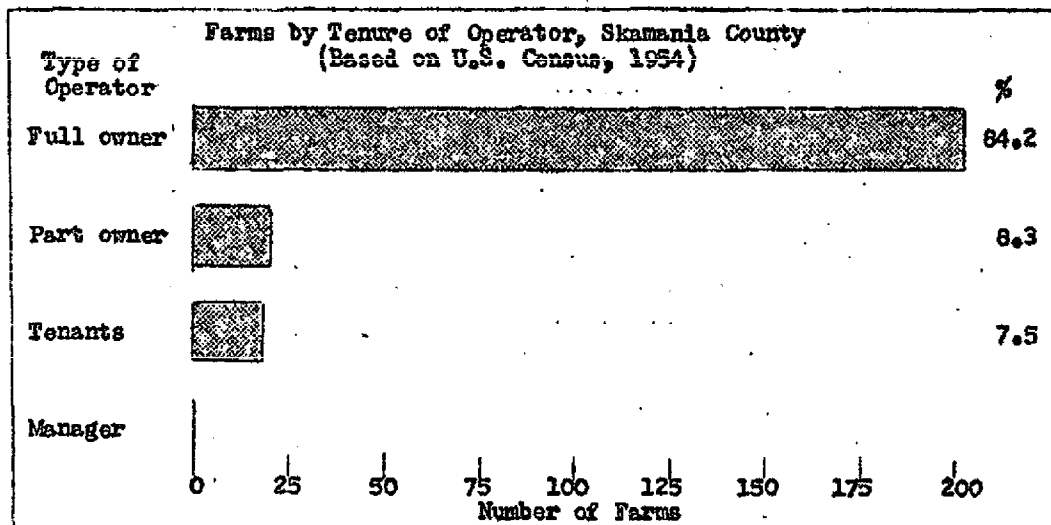


Figure 9.- Farms by Tenure of Operator, Skamania County, 1954

Table 13.- Farm Tenancy, Number and Percent of Farms  
By Tenure of Operator, Skamania County  
1925-1954

| Year | Number<br>Farms in<br>County | Full Owners           |                            | Part Owners           |                            | Managers              |                            | Tenants               |                            |
|------|------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
|      |                              | number<br>of<br>farms | percent<br>of all<br>farms | number<br>of<br>farms | percent<br>of all<br>farms | number<br>of<br>farms | percent<br>of all<br>farms | number<br>of<br>farms | percent<br>of all<br>farms |
| 1925 | 310                          | 210                   | 67.7                       | 30                    | 9.7                        | 21                    | 6.8                        | 49                    | 15.8                       |
| 1930 | 278                          | 205                   | 73.7                       | 22                    | 7.9                        | 3                     | 1.1                        | 48                    | 17.3                       |
| 1935 | 453                          | 339                   | 74.8                       | 22                    | 4.8                        | 1                     | .2                         | 91                    | 20.1                       |
| 1940 | 331                          | 240                   | 72.5                       | 41                    | 12.4                       | 1                     | .3                         | 49                    | 14.8                       |
| 1945 | 304                          | 251                   | 82.6                       | 25                    | 8.2                        | 2                     | .6                         | 26                    | 8.6                        |
| 1950 | 239                          | 212                   | 88.7                       | 12                    | 5.0                        | 1                     | .4                         | 14                    | 5.8                        |
| 1954 | 240                          | 202                   | 84.2                       | 20                    | 8.3                        | 0                     | 0                          | 18                    | 7.5                        |

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

#### Farm Facilities

In 1954 most farms in Skamania County were above a general national average in the use of facilities which save labor and make rural life easier and more pleasant. Farmers in this county enjoy rural electric service provided by private and public power concerns. Farm use of electricity and telephone service was slightly below state averages in 1954. About 92 percent of the farms used electricity. The Washington State average was 97 percent. Only 36

Table 14.- Specified Facilities and Equipment on Farms  
Skamania County, 1954

| Facility or<br>Equipment Item                        | Number of<br>Farms Using | Percent of All<br>Farms in County<br>Equipped |
|--|--------------------------|---|
| Telephone.....                                       | 86                       | 35.8  |
| Electricity.....                                     | 221                      | 92.1  |
| Television set.....                                  | 75                       | 31.2  |
| Piped running water.....                             | 221                      | 92.1  |
| Home freezer.....                                    | 116                      | 48.3  |
| Electric pig brooder.....                            | —                        | —   |
| Power feed grinder.....                              | 20                       | 8.3   |
| Milking machine.....                                 | 10                       | 4.2   |
| Grain combines.....                                  | —                        | —   |
| Corn pickers.....                                    | —                        | —   |
| Pick-up balers.....                                  | 10                       | 4.2   |
| Field forage harvesters.....                         | 5                        | 2.1   |
| Artificial ponds, reservoirs<br>and earth tanks..... | 15                       | 6.2   |
| Motortrucks.....                                     | 141                      | 58.8  |
| Tractors.....  | 165                      | 68.8  |
| Automobiles.....                                     | 186                      | 77.5  |

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

percent of the Skamania County farms had telephones compared with a state average of 74 percent. Television usage was low in 1954 because of topographic barriers and distance from stations in the Portland area. Because of the small farms, ownership of tractors and powered equipment is not as great as in the major farm regions of the state. Some farms are isolated in hilly terrain and remoteness imposes heavy expenses for electrical and telephone utilities to provide services.

### Farmland Utilization

Crops were harvested from only about 10 percent of the land in farms in 1954. An additional 6 percent was in cropland used only for pasture and 4 percent lay idle or in fallow. Typical of western Washington farmland utilization, woodlands made up the largest share of the acreage with nearly 39 percent in woodland pasture and 28 percent in woodland. Most of this farm woodland was uncleared, remaining in stumpland, logged-over land or in young regrowth timber. Several factors have resulted in this pattern of land use. Clearing cut-over forest land is expensive and laborious. Many have left such acreage in hilly areas in stumps and brush as woodland pastures or for timber and Christmas tree land. Woodland owners are beginning to practice farm forestry for the harvesting of saw logs, pulpwood, fuelwood and other marketable forest products.

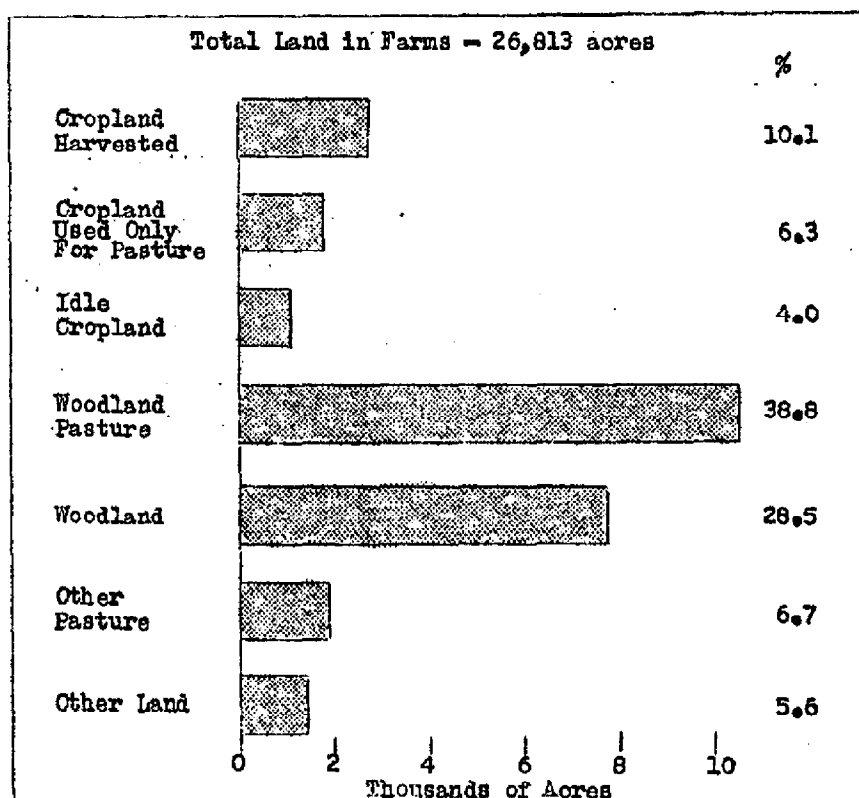


Figure 10.- Utilization of Farmland in Skamania County, 1954

### Irrigation and Facilities

Because of a dry summer climate and the desire to get higher yields of pasture and feed crops, there has been an increasing interest in irrigation.

Upland soils as well as alluvial bottom land soils generally become dry in midsummer. There is abundant ground water and stream water available, however, when proper facilities and equipment are put into use. Between 1949 and 1954 there were nine farms which added irrigation facilities, and 100 additional acres were irrigated in Skamania County. Most of the new irrigation facilities are sprinkler systems used to irrigate pastures.

Table 15.- Irrigated Farms: Number and Acreage  
Skamania County, 1949 and 1954

| Item                                      | 1949     | 1954        |
|---|----------|-------------|
| Number of irrigated farms.....            | 1        | 10          |
| Land in irrigated farms.....              | 94 acres | 1,157 acres |
| Land irrigated 1/.....                    | 18 acres | 118 acres   |
| Irrigated land in farms according to use: |          |             |
| Farms irrigating crops.....               | 1        | 8           |
| Farms irrigating pasture.....             | 1        | 4           |
| Acres of crops irrigated.....             | 1        | 14          |
| Acres of pasture irrigated.....           | 12       | 74          |

1/ Includes land irrigated by canals, pipes and overhead sprinkler systems.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

#### Farm Residence and Operation

Skamania County is predominantly a part-time farming region. A large majority of farmers divide their labor between agriculture and off-farm work. In a forested region such as Skamania County, farmers have numerous seasonal opportunities to work in nearby mills and logging operations or for the federal and state forest management services or in construction projects. At some time during the year 1954 about 79 percent of all farm owners or residents earned wages away from their farms. Over 140 farm operators or 59 percent earned more income from outside work than they did from sales of products off their farms. Over 73 percent of the county's 240 farmers worked in nonfarm industries more than 100 days during the year.